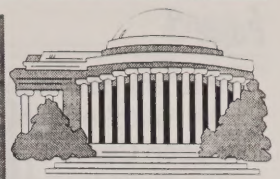


# The Capitol Hill Monitor



Volume 5 Issue 2 (1999)

May 1999

## AREA FEDERAL/MILITARY TRUNKS

An abundance of federal and military trunked radio systems operate in the Washington-Baltimore area -- probably more than anywhere else in the country. Here is an overview of the systems. Only output frequencies are listed. Unless otherwise noted, all systems are Motorola [the system ID appears in brackets]. Anyone with additional information, especially talkgroup IDs, please pass them along! Special thanks to David Wilson and Willard Hardman for their assistance.

Check out this site for some locations that have received authorizations for centrally procured trunking systems: <http://www.monmouth.army.mil/bstrs/>

### Federal

#### **NTIA-Washington (Commerce) [4E00] 406.250-406.850-408.450-408.700-408.900**

This is a real multi-user system with the most diverse collection of agencies using it. It has been approved for eight channels but only five are active (some users complain of occasional busy signals).

The National Telecommunications & Information Administration acts as the system landlord, but its tenants include Bolling AFB, Air Force District of Washington, some elements of the Naval District of Washington, Naval Intelligence Center, Anacostia and Washington Navy Yard, Naval Postal facility, Holocaust Museum, National Archives, Supreme Court, FDA, Library of Congress, USAF Honor Guard and some Smithsonian users.

#### **NTIA-Baltimore (Commerce) [3C29] 406.175-406.425-406.650-407.050-407.425**

This is also a multi-agency system approved for five channels, but it is nowhere as active as the Washington system. The transmit site is on the USF&G building in downtown Baltimore.

#### **NIH – Bethesda (HHS) [4732] 409.000-410.225-410.425-411.450-411.825-413.450**

Several months ago this system expanded to six channels. Most NIH radio users, including those at the outlying facilities, have switched to this system. This includes police, fire, and public works users.

#### **Cumberland (Justice)**

This has been approved as a five-channel system. We have been unable to receive it from the Washington area but it's alleged to be active, probably at the federal prison. Any information is appreciated!

#### **Goddard Space Flight Center, Greenbelt (NASA) [4631]**

**407.000-408.150-408.625-409.525-410.275**  
All support functions, including security, fire, safety and maintenance, use this five-channel system. 407.0 is normally used for phone patches.

#### **Washington (Non-Member of IRAC) [2C36] 406.200-406.300-406.525-406.775-407.025-407.950-408.850-409.250-411.200**

This system has been approved for eight channels but actually has nine. The "owner" is an inter-departmental center which operates totally encrypted on two talkgroup sets, mostly during weekdays. The balance, and heaviest users, are either DoD or Army and include almost all of Fort Belvoir (including most tenant units), Military District of Washington, the DoD/MDW buses, WHCA, and the Defense Information Systems Agency.

### Military

#### **Andrews Air Force Base [6B01] 406.350-406.950-407.150-407.425-408.025-408.200-408.750-408.950-409.350-409.725**

Andrews operates a "campus" system. In other words, almost everybody at Andrews has a radio on this system including the Marine Reserve Squadron, DC Air National Guard, and the Naval Air Facility. However, all units on the system are located on Andrews AFB. The major exceptions



that are not on the trunked system are the Civil Air Patrol and the Air National Guard Coordination Center. Security elements supporting the Presidential Flight Office (Air Force 1, etc.) are usually encrypted. It has been approved for 10 channels. 409.35 and 409.725 are mostly used for phone patches.

**Aberdeen Proving Ground (Army) [243B]  
406.350-406.700-407.275-408.550-409.025**

Aberdeen and the adjacent Edgewood facility operate under the same system but with separate sites, voice and control channels for each facility. A total of 12 channels have been authorized and frequency assignments changed several times since this system was initially installed. We appreciate any updates. Most base functions now communicate on this system which is designed to support more than 3500 users. This is primarily the base support system for both installations.

**Edgewood Arsenal (Army) [243B]  
406.225-407.250-409.500-410.150**

The Edgewood site has been approved for seven channels but we have confirmed only four channels in use. This is a command oriented system for use by research and development activities as opposed to the base oriented system above. The talkgroups deal primarily with range safety and various types of testing.

**Fort A.P. Hill (Army)**

**141.200-142.475-142.925-143.325-143.400**

This is a five-channel single-site trunked system. The project was completed in June 1997. The system is used for base support activities – military police, fire services, medics, and public works. It becomes particularly active during the Boy Scout Jamborees. Fort A.P. Hill is a sub-post of Fort Belvoir and is all but exclusively a training facility.

**Fort Detrick (Army) [3230]**

**406.550-407.075-408.550-409.150-409.750**

Mostly Military Police, fire, and DPW use this system. We would appreciate some talkgroup info.

**Fort Meade (Army) [6B03]**

**406.325-407.400-407.575-409.450**

This is a dual-site trunked system with nine console positions. This system is used by Military

Police, fire, DPW, and contractors and is supposed to support more than 750 users. It's been approved for five channels, but we can only verify that four are active.

**Walter Reed Army Medical Center**

This system is not yet in operation. It supposed to support more than 300 users. A Radiax antenna system will enable WRAMC to access the government-owned SECONET system.

**Dahlgren (Navy) [5D10]**

**140.025-140.825**

This system went online recently. It appears to be a two-site system with two different control channels. So far activity has been light and we have only found the two channels listed above.

**Patuxent River Naval Air Station [2305]**

**406.350-410.150-411.325-412.050-412.750**

Primary base functions using this system include police, fire and DPW. We especially need talkgroup usage info.

**Naval District of Washington**

**138.775-140.125-140.625-138.650**

This system was approved for five channels. So far only the four channels listed above are active. This is an Ericsson/GE EDACS trunked system. Fire and security appear to be the only users.

**Mystery EDACS System**

We have found another EDACS system. So far it's seldom used, but its controller transmits on 142.600. We suspect the outlying Naval facilities will eventually migrate to this system.

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## **FAIRFAX COUNTY AND DELAWARE MAKING DIGITAL MORE ACCESSIBLE**

Fairfax County is working on plans that will allow citizens to purchase a digital radio from Motorola which the county would then program and license for use. The public information staff, says Lt. Curt J. Andrich, is working on this plan now. Cleveland and Seattle have similar programs which he says are working out well.

Meanwhile, Delaware has completed its media-public access policy for those who seek to monitor



the state's digital trunked system. The four-page policy divides talkgroups into one of four categories: primary talkgroups, which include those used for dispatching or for running wanted/stolen checks; communications talkgroups, which are primarily intended for unit-to-unit conversations; operational/tactical talkgroups, which are those used for confidential law enforcement operations; mutual aid/shared talkgroups, which are non-exclusive to any single agency and are intended for inter-operability.

Under this policy, only "primary talkgroups" are available to the media and public. "Absent a compelling reason," the policy assures, "state agency personnel will not be moved to other talkgroups to keep the media/public from monitoring dispatch and data transmissions that have been previously authorized" for public monitoring. In the case of communication related to criminal history or other sensitive information, a talkgroup from one of the other categories will supposedly be used so as not to violate pre-established laws dealing with the dissemination of criminal history record information.

The policy outlines the procedure prospective trunked system listeners must follow to get an authorized radio. Once the radio is ordered from Motorola, an agreement form must be signed between the requester and each state agency and/or non-state 800 MHz user agency which the requester intends to monitor. The policy does not govern non-state trunked user agencies unless the agencies agree in writing to be subject to the policy.

The Department of Public Safety communications division will program radios to provide access to the talkgroups specified in the authorized agreement forms. A "reasonable fee" may be charged for programming services provided under the policy. The requester must deliver the authorization forms and radios to the Dover facility which will assign programming responsibilities to the appropriate county radio repair facility. Radios will be programmed in receive-only mode and "appropriate rechecks" of the radios will be conducted on a schedule to be developed to ensure that end-user equipment has not been altered.

Contact Alan for a copy of the policy or you can call Richard Reynolds, manager of Bandwidth Systems, at 302-739-9648.



## METRO RECOMMENDS 490 MHz DIGITAL TRUNKED SYSTEM

Last month the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority's budget committee unanimously recommended that the design of a proposed 490 MHz digital trunked radio system be sent to the board of directors for final approval. Also recommended was an "interim" radio system which would cover improvements for the existing VHF system while the 490 MHz system is being designed and built.

The interim system will take 14 months to complete. No time frame was provided for the proposed digital trunked system. The frequencies are: 489.5125, 489.5375, 490.7625, 490.7875, 490.8375, 490.8625, 490.8875, 490.9125, 490.9375 and 490.9625. The "Emergency Rail Rehabilitation Plan," approved by the authority on April 22, calls for putting radio scanners in all station managers' kiosks so managers know about delays and can inform riders.

## EASTERN SHORE COUNTIES TEAM-UP FOR TRUNKING

Motorola is negotiating a contract with Queen Anne's and Talbot counties for a digital multi-site 866-869 MHz trunked radio system. Caroline County will have the option of joining the system at a later date as its funding permits. Kent County opted not to participate.

Phil Taylor, Queen Anne's County emergency services director, says they are in the early nego-



tiation stages and still need to nail down sites, microwave paths/configuration, frequency allocations and price. The license application has recently been filed.



## MOBILE DATA COMPUTERS COMING SOON IN PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY

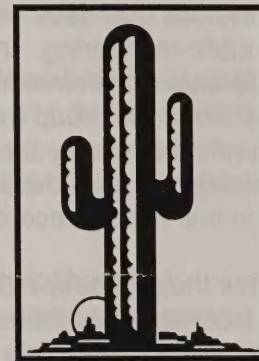
This year the Prince George's County police department will begin the process of installing 867 cellular-based mobile data computers in marked patrol vehicles. Nineteen briefcase models will also be distributed. The computers will allow officers to run license and criminal checks on subjects they stop. Patrol officers will also have the technology to electronically submit crime reports to supervisors. After being approved, the reports will then be forwarded to the records section. Officers will also have access to the computer-aided dispatch system and will be dispatched to non-priority calls directly from the CAD system. The department received a grant for \$12.1 million to complete the project -- one of the largest awards in the nation.

## SMARTROUTE SYSTEMS TO GET NEW REPEATER FREQUENCY

SmartRoute Systems says it plans to upgrade its repeater system in the DC area in the near future. The new frequency will be 452.65. SmartTraveler provides real-time, location specific traffic and transit information via 202-863-1313 or

#211 on wireless phones. In addition, SmartRoute Systems, Inc, Navigation Technologies and PageNet are developing nationwide traveler information products that provide drivers with enhanced traveler information based on current traffic conditions. PageNet will provide the communication link to launch these services this year.

Those interested in becoming a part of the traffic reporting team can register online at <http://www.smartraveler.com> or call Drew Venters, the volunteer coordinator, at 202-554-7700.



## LISTENING ON THE BORDER

by Ralph Johnson (RJoh619514@aol.com)

The U.S. Border Patrol, as we know, polices the international borders of the United States. The patrol's greatest effort is to combat the tidal wave of illegal immigrants and drugs from Mexico.

Last summer I was in the Sierra Vista and Douglas, Arizona area and had opportunities to observe the Border Patrol in action, talk with a local federal officer and to listen to some of the Border Patrol frequencies. Interestingly enough, despite the sensitivity of some of the military installations in the area, and what they are capable of doing, the area is an extremely active smuggling area. I heard several stories about drug and illegal alien smuggling through Ft. Huachuca, AZ. In my own hiking in the hills, I was not worried about bears as much as I was about wandering into a possibly armed group of aliens being smuggled through Ft. Huachuca.



The task of the Border Patrol is daunting. In trying to slow the tide of illicit drugs and illegal immigrants, the Border Patrol has lots of force arrayed against it. Besides the sheer number of people and size of the country and large amounts of drugs, the people who run the drug and immigrant smuggling operations use increasingly sophisticated equipment. Among other things, they use advanced encrypted communications, night vision glasses and combine drug smuggling with smuggling illegal immigrants. These items have been recovered from failed smuggling attempts.

That fact that the smugglers will abandon expensive communications and night observation gear indicates the groups have a lot of money to buy these items and consider such loss a business expense. The illegal alien, or mule, in addition to coming across the border, sometimes carries a couple kilos of drugs. The illegal, if caught, pays the price and the person behind the operation only loses a few kilos, not the whole shipment of drugs.

On a hot Fourth of July, I watched the Border Patrol officers in the area around Douglas, AZ. Officers cruised up and down the fenced border, manned static posts, walked the gullies, checked identifications of people in the Mall and cruised highways connecting to Interstate 10 trying to stem the tide of people coming through the area.

I listened to some frequencies I learned from research, friends, and ones I found from scanning. Actually, there was not much to hear. This is to their credit. Since I support their efforts, I am glad they use encryption and good operations security to protect themselves. I got, as I said, some frequencies from friends and others by scanning. If I heard an encrypted frequency as I scanned, I assumed that since the frequency is in a certain band, it must be related to the Border Patrol.

These are the frequencies I found:

155.445 Border Alliance Group (drugs)  
163.650 Border Patrol  
163.725 Border Patrol  
163.750 Border Patrol  
168.900 Border Patrol

163.725 was always encrypted. On 163.750 I heard requests for license checks. 163.750 is the

Mule Mountain repeater, between Sierra Vista and Bisbee, AZ. Mule Mountain is a peak widely used by amateur, commercial and public service repeaters.

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## Video Announcement: P.G.F.D.

Review by Alan Henney

One of the appeals of scanner monitoring, at least for me, has been the excitement -- or even the adrenaline rush one gets when hearing firsthand what may turn out to be a big spot news story. Scanner listeners often fantasize about hearing that "big story" and making it to the scene in time to videotape a few scarce seconds of flames blowing out of a garden apartment window before being smothered by water; or snap a heroic picture of medics working on crash victims.

Tom Yeatman, a lifelong Prince George's County resident, CHM member and scanner listener since the mid-1970's, has compiled a video -- a collection of his best works -- 13 Prince George's County fire and rescue incidents from the early 1990's to the present. Tom has lots of fire action ranging from the Planet X fire in College Park to the recent crash of the Metro Traffic plane into a Bowie house. Each incident is several minutes long -- more than brief newscast video -- which helps put everything in better perspective. You'll also see close-up video of the fire fighters at work before the "big" cameras arrive and the crime-scene tape goes up.

P.G.F.D. is sold through Advanced Print & Video. For details check <http://www.firevideo.com> or call 301-946-7881.

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## NEWSSCAN

SERBS LISTENING IN ON NATO. Yugoslav forces have apparently thwarted some NATO air attacks because at times allied pilots speak to each other and to ground-based air controllers over open communications systems. The problem,



says the May 1 Washington Post, is that some NATO countries' aircraft do not carry secure communications equipment. Their governments were either unwilling or unable on short notice to equip their planes with secure radio gear compatible with U.S. aircraft and other up-to-date planes in the 19-member alliance.

When the planes without secure communications take part in operations, pilots in other planes must speak on insecure radio frequencies that NATO knows are being monitored by Yugoslav forces as well as civilian radio enthusiasts. In some cases, the reports say, Yugoslav forces apparently have known the target and timing of a NATO attack and the direction in which the planes were flying. Following NATO practice, the conversations are in English. NATO countries have struggled during the alliance's 50-year history with making the often-unique military equipment of individual countries compatible with that of others.

Aircraft from NATO's most advanced military countries -- the United States, Britain, France and others -- have equipment in the cockpits of their fighter jets that allows them to scramble communications and to receive secure target and other data from AWACS and other surveillance aircraft whose job it is to survey the skies and the ground. But newer alliance partners, and those that do not regularly take part in NATO exercises, do not.

But the NATO operation faces another challenge: ever-more sophisticated hobbyists who collect and then disperse, via the Internet, military radio frequencies and the takeoff of NATO jets headed out for bombing runs each day from bases in Italy, England, Germany and elsewhere. "They stand at the end of the runways, look at the tail-wing numbers, and call me," said John Pike, an intelligence expert at the Federation of American Scientists whose Web site includes a detailed description of the types and squadrons aircraft belong to (see: <http://www.fas.org/index.html>).

About a week into the air war, Lt. Col. Ed Worley, an Air Force public affairs officer at the Pentagon, received a call from a retired military officer saying that, using his radio equipment, he had heard NATO pilots talking about operations and was worried it could compromise war plans. It was a Saturday afternoon, and Worley recalled he was "shocked and dismayed."

Similar problems were encountered during the Persian Gulf War in 1991, where commanders had to fly flight tasking orders to Navy ships because the Army and Navy did not have compatible, secure communications systems.

W3USS CLOSING ITS DOORS. The Capitol Hill Amateur Radio Society (CHARS), a nonpartisan organization of Capitol Hill employees, disbanded on April 30. When George R. Stephens (W3GRS), who served as the GPO's liaison to the Senate Republican Policy Committee for the past 18 years, retired on April 30, W3USS went with him. Stephens, 64, ran the society for the last 13 of its 30 years.

The association, says the April 26 Roll Call, began in 1968 when an aide to then-Senator Sparkman placed a note in the Capitol Hill newspaper Roll Call requesting that other radio amateurs working on the Hill contact him. The station was established in 1969 and associated antennas were located on the roof of the Russell Senate Office Building. The original station equipment was donated by Senator Goldwater, some of which is still in use at the station today.

In its heyday, the group had about 20 members. Only five were left, and that's why the club reached its end point. Though the club is disbanding, Peter Huber, another former Senate aide and long-time club member, will retain the club's call sign and license. The equipment will be donated to charity and the antenna will be removed from the Russell roof. Similar amateur stations exist at the Smithsonian Institution (NN3SI), the Voice of America (K3VOA), the Pentagon (K4AF), and the Department of State (W3DOS). For more info: <http://www.geocities.com/Hollywood/2044/>

MONTGOMERY COUNTY TRUNKING PLANS NOT FINALIZED. Montgomery County has spent more than \$1.6 million in negotiations and other preparations for its proposed trunked radio system, but has yet to enter into a contract for the new system. The Gazette Regional News reported that most of the money has gone to a consultant who has provided technical expertise during contract negotiations with Motorola for a new public safety radio system.



The county hired TRW, a Fairfax, Va., consulting firm to help plan the system and negotiate with Motorola. TRW will receive about \$1.4 million for negotiation analysis and program management. Negotiations with Motorola started on April 30. The county council allocated \$27 million to cover costs associated with building the system. The county also is negotiating with landowners for access to 11 antenna sites.

CHARLES COUNTY STUMBLING FORWARD. A committee studying the problems inherent in Charles County's fire, EMS and sheriff radio systems completed a report and forwarded a copy to the county commissioners earlier this year. An article appearing in the Maryland Independent quoted the committee chair person, Waldorf Fire Chief Dan Stevens, warning that "the system is going on nine years old, and we've had nothing but problems and shortcomings with it since it was installed."

The problems appeared to be headed toward a resolution when the county commissioners awarded a contract to Telecom Towers Inc., a company that installs telecommunication towers and maintains them. The contract included a comprehensive study of the county's communications' plan and system to be done by a subcontractor, RCC Consultants.

At the last minute, however, Telecom Towers merged with another company, and everything came to a grinding halt until legal snarls could be resolved. The county administrator said when the situation straightens out, the county will commission a comprehensive study that will review the Charles County Sheriff's Office and the fire and EMS radio systems. Stevens says it would take at least three years before a new radio system would be up and running if a study were conducted right away.

Of special concern are the fire alerting systems that are activated by the two-tone paging system on 158.775 which suffers in the west side of the county from poor coverage and interference from Loudoun County. Often communication between fire and EMS units are completely cut off by Loudoun County school bus and trash truck drivers who also use 158.775.

The VHF system has four fire and EMS channels used in the simplex mode only. Stevens says at least eight frequencies are needed to provide adequate communication. The ideal system would have all channels repeated through the county's communications center, similar to the primary sheriff channels.

Stevens also said the county needs more towers to supplement existing sites in Hughesville, La Plata, St. Charles, Morgantown, Douglas Point in Nanjemoy and Bryans Road. The committee recommended additional towers in Indian Head, Nanjemoy and Clifton in Newburg.

U OF M TO GET QSL CARD COLLECTION. The University of Maryland's McKeldin Library recently completed negotiations with the Committee to Preserve Radio Verifications of the Broadcast Pioneers Library of American Broadcasting to serve as the repository for the organization's collection of more than 30,000 QSL cards (radio verifications). Many of the cards, states the Spring Library Issues newsletter, date from the early days of radio, the early 1920's, to the present. The committee remains an active organization and will continue its work to ensure that the collection will continue to grow.

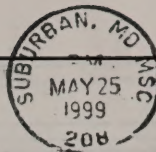
CELL PHONE USE AIDS MEMORY BUT MAY HURT BRAIN? The first official investigation in England into the health risks of mobile phones has discovered they do affect brain activity. The study, as reported by Sarah Ryle of the Washington Times, was conducted by a medical engineer based at Bristol Royal Infirmary in England and examined the effect of mobile phone use on memory. Participants in the study were able to think faster while using the phones and performed better in a memory test immediately after using them. Critics warn that any evidence of interference with normal brain functions by signals from wireless phones should be of concern, even if evidence shows short-term memory benefits.

*Eric Carlson, Eugene Corioni, Jeff Duer and Mike Peyton contributed to this issue's NewsScan. Please notify us if you come across articles of interest.*



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6912 Prince Georges Avenue  
Takoma Park, MD 20912



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Please address all correspondence to Alan. We encourage readers to submit material and write articles that relate to the hobby. All submissions are subject to editing for style and content. When submitting material please make certain we can contact you should we have any questions. We welcome frequency and visitor requests, but please include a reply envelope.

Contact: Alan Henney  
6912 Prince George's Avenue  
Takoma Park, MD 20912-5414  
301-270-2531 (voice) / 301-270-5774 (fax)

#### Newsletter Staff:

Dr. Willard Hardman, Executive Editor  
(hardman1@ix.netcom.com)  
Mike Peyton, Technical Advisor  
(Michael.Peyton@mci.com)

Ken Fowler, Northern Virginia Correspondent  
(kfowler1@osf1.gmu.edu)  
Alan Henney, Editor & Treasurer  
(henney@doubled.com)

The Capitol Hill Monitor is the non-profit newsletter of the Capitol Hill Monitors. The newsletter keeps scanner enthusiasts abreast of local meetings, frequency profiles and other topics of interest. Dues are \$10 and include 12 issues (back issues cost \$1 each). Kindly make checks payable to Alan Henney. Membership will be prorated accordingly in the event of a postage increase.

#### Join Local Scanner Enthusiasts On-Line!

We encourage computer users to take part in discussions on Frank Carson's Open Channel computer BBS (301-203-8478) or subscribe to the Scan-DC listserv by sending an e-mail to major-domo@qth.net with the words "subscribe scan-dc" (no quotes) as the message.